**Kiribati** (a.k.a. Gilbertese)

Helps for Reading Vital Records

Alan Marchant, 29 January 2021

Alphabet

* Kiribati uses only the following letters. All other letters are rare before the late 20th century, except in foreign names.

A B E I K M N NG O R T U W

* The letter T is very common, especially at the beginning of names. The uppercase cursive T can sometimes be confused with the unlikely P or S. Lower-case t is often written with the cross-bar shifted right, detached from the vertical stroke.
* Lower-case g is the only letter with a down-stroke. It exists only in the combination ng (equivalent to ñ).
* The cursive lower-case n and u are about equally common and are not easily distinguished; lower-case n and r are more distinguishable.

Months

English and Kiribati forms may exist in the same document.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| January | Tianuari |  | July | Turai |
| February | Beberuare |  | August | Aokati |
| March | Mati |  | September | Tebetembwa |
| April | Eberi |  | October | Okitobwa |
| May | Mei |  | November | Nobembwa |
| June | Tun |  | December | Ritembwa |

Terminology

Kiribati words can have many alternate meanings. This list identifies usages encountered in the headings of vital records.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| aba makoro | island |  | ma | and |
| abana | resident |  | maiu | life |
| ae | who, which |  | makuri | occupation |
| aika | of, who |  | mane, mwane | male |
| aine | female |  | mare | married |
| akea | none (n.b. not a name) |  | te tia mare | marriage officer |
| aki | not |  | mate | dead |
| ana | her, his |  | matena | death |
| ao | and, with |  | minita | minister |
| araia | list |  | mwenga, | home |
| aran | name |  | mwinibain | signature |
| are | that |  | n | in, at |
| aro | religion |  | na. | item number |
| ataki | known |  | nakoa | profession |
| atei | children |  | namwakina | month |
| auti | home |  | natin | children |
| beba | license |  | nei, ne, N | female title |
| boki | book |  | ngkana, ñkana | when |
| booma | form |  | ni | of |
| bong | day |  | o n aoraki | hospital |
| bongina | date |  | raure | divorced |
| buki | cause |  | ririki | year, age |
| bun, buna | spouse |  | rorona | birth |
| bung | birth |  | tabo, kain, taumwini | place |
| buniaki | born |  | tai | date |
| e | he, she |  | taman | father |
| iai | was, did |  | taumwini | an official |
| iein | married |  | te | article (a, an, the) |
| I-Kiribati | native islander |  | tei | child |
| I-Matang | foreigner |  | ten, tem, te, T, Na | male title |
| kain | from |  | tenua | three |
| kakoana | witness |  | teuana | one |
| karerei | authorization |  | tinan | mother |
| kariaiaki | authorized |  | tuai | not yet |
| karo | parent |  | ua, uoua | two |
| kawa | town |  |  |  |
| ke | or |  |  |  |
| korobokian | register |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Names

* Strings of vowels (3 or more) are common.
* Names frequently include repeated syllables, e.g. *bwebwe* or *teitei.*
* In foreign-inspired names where a J might be expected, Kiribati uses I or T.
* In foreign-inspired names where an L might be expected, Kiribati uses R.
* Prefixes, esp. Te, may run into the given name; watch for a capital letter following Te to start the actual name.
* Before the late 20th century only a given name is typically given. Later, a patronymic (father’s given name) is often added.
* Watch for apostrophes placed between letters within names.

Places

| island groups | islands |  | major villages, towns, and places | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gilbert Islands | |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Abaiang, a.k.a. Apia or Charlotte Is. | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Aoneaba | Aonobuaka | Borotiam | Ewena |
|  |  |  | Koinawa | Morikao | Ouba | Nuotaea |
|  |  |  | Ribono | Tabontebike | Taburao | Tabwiroa |
|  |  |  | Takarano | Tanimaiaki | Tebero |  |
|  |  |  | Tebunginako | Tebwanga | Teirio |  |
|  |  |  | Teiro | Tuarabu | Ubanteman |  |
|  | Abemama |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Abatiku | Bangotante-kabaia | Baretoa | Biike |
|  |  |  | Binoinano |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Kabangaki | Kariatebike | Kauma | Kenna |
|  |  |  | Manoku | Tabiang | Tabontebike |  |
|  |  |  | Tanimainiku | Tebanga | Tekatirirake |  |
|  | Aranuka |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Buariki | Buarua | Kauake | Takaeang |
|  | Arorae |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Tamaroa | Roreti | Taribo |  |
|  | Beru |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Nuka | Rororongo | Tabiang | Tabukinberu |
|  | Butaritari, a.k.a. Makin | | |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Antekana | Bikatieta | Bikaati | Keuea |
|  |  |  | Kuuma | Makin | Onomaru |  |
|  |  |  | Tabonuea | Tanimainiku | Taritari |  |
|  |  |  | Taubukin-meang | Temano-kunuea | Tikurere | Ukiangang |
|  | Kuria |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Bouatoa | Buariki | Marenaua |  |
|  |  |  | Norauea | Oneeke | Tabontebike |  |
|  | Maiana |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Aobike | Bubutei | Raweai | Tebanga |
|  |  |  | Tebiauea | Tebikerai | Tebwangaua | Tebwangetua |
|  |  |  | Teitai | Tekaranga | Tematan-tongo | Toora |
|  | Marakei |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Antai | Baretoa | Buota | Bwainuna |
|  |  |  | Norauea | Raweta | Rawannawi |  |
|  |  |  | Teititi | Temotu | Tekarakan |  |
|  |  |  | Tekuanga | Teraereke | Terokea |  |
|  | Nikunau |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Bukerua | Muribenua | Mwanriiki | Nikumanu |
|  |  |  | Rungata | Tabomatang | Tabutoa |  |
|  | Nonouti |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Abamakoro | Autukia | Benuaroa | Matang |
|  |  |  | Noumatang | Rotuma | Taboiaki |  |
|  |  |  | Temanoku | Temotu | Teuabu |  |
|  | Onotoa |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Aiaki | Buariki | Otoae | Tabuarorae |
|  |  |  | Tanaeang | Tekawa | Temao |  |
|  | Tabiteuea (Meang / Maiaki, North / South) | | | | |  |
|  |  |  | Aanikai | Aiwa | Aranuka | Bangai |
|  |  |  | Buariki | Buatua | Buota | Eita |
|  |  |  | Kabuna | Katabanga | Nautia | Nikutiri |
|  |  |  | Noutuoru | Taku | Tanaatoorua | Tanaeang |
|  |  |  | Tauma | Taungaeaka | Tebaukie | Tebouria |
|  |  |  | Tekabwibwi | Tekaman | Tekuku |  |
|  |  |  | Tenatorua | Tengabuka | Terikiai |  |
|  |  |  | Tewai | Utiroa | Unitia |  |
|  | Tamana |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Arabungea | Bakaka | Bakarawa | Barebuka |
|  | Tarawa (North / South) | | |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Abaokoro | Abatao | Ambo | Bairiki |
|  |  |  | Banraeaba | Betio | Bikenibeu |  |
|  |  |  | Bonriki | Buariki | Buota |  |
|  |  |  | Eutan | Marenanuka | Nawerewere |  |
|  |  |  | Taborio | Tanaea | Tangintebu | Taungaea |
|  | |  | Teinainano | Temakin | Temwaiku | Tetabuki |
| Phoenix Islands | |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Abariringa, a.k.a. Canton Island | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Tebaronga |  |  |  |
|  | Birnie Island | | |  |  |  |
|  | Enderbury Island | | |  |  |  |
|  | Manra, a.k.a. Sydney Island | | |  |  |  |
|  | McKean Island | | |  |  |  |
|  | Nikumaroro, a.k.a. Gardner Island | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Arundel plantation | |  |  |
|  | Orono, a.k.a. Hull Island | | |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Arariki |  |  |  |
|  | Rawaki, a.k.a. Phoenix Island | | | |  |  |
| Line Islands | |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Caroline Island, a.k.a. Millennium Is. | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Long Is. | Nake Is. | South Is. |  |
|  | Flint Island | | |  |  |  |
|  | Kiritimati, a.k.a. Christmas Island | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Banana | Benson Pt. | Cook Is. | |
|  |  |  | Levers Plantation | | Londres or London | |
|  |  |  | Paris | Poland | Tabwakea |  |
|  | Malden Island | | |  |  |  |
|  | Starbuck Island | | |  |  |  |
|  | Tabuaeran, a.k.a. Fanning Island | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Aontenaa | Aramari | Betania | Eten |
|  |  |  | Mwanuku | Napari | Paelau |  |
|  |  |  | Tereitaki | Tereitannano | Terine |  |
|  | Teraina, a.k.a. Washington Island | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Abaiang | Arabata | Kaaitara | Kaua-mwemwe |
|  |  |  | Matanibike | Mwakeitari | Onauea |  |
|  |  |  | Tangkore | Uteute |  |  |
|  | Vostok Island | | |  |  |  |
| other | Banaba, a.k.a. Ocean Island | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Antereen | Aonoanne | Buakonikai |  |
|  |  |  | Tabiang | Tabwewa | Uma |  |

The these place names were identified from Wikepedia entries and similar internet sites. There is unfortunately no formal gazeteer for Kiribati. For the most part, the names are phonetic transcriptions from the local idiom; therefore minor spelling variations are common.

Civil districts in Kiribati typically are named for a major island and include several neighboring islands. Also, it is not uncommon for district records to include some events from distant locations.